

IN THE CLAIMS:

1 - 14 (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) A continuous process for the preparation of silane of formula SiH_4 by catalytic disproportionation of trichlorosilane of formula SiHCl_3 to form SiH_4 and silicon tetrachloride of formula SiCl_4 in a ~~reactive/distillative~~ reactive and distillative reaction zone comprising

- 5 (a) introducing SiHCl_3 into a ~~reactive/distillative~~ reactive and distillative reaction zone comprising a catalyst bed of a catalytically active solid at a pressure of 1 to 50 bar to form a lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product and a higher-boiling SiCl_4 -containing bottom product;
- 10 (b) removing the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product from the ~~reactive/distillative~~ reactive and distillative reaction zone and condensing the SiH_4 -containing product in an intermediate condensation at a temperature in the range from -5°C to 40°C ;
- 15 (c) introducing the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product which is not condensed in the intermediate condensation into a rectifying section and increasing the SiH_4 -concentration in the SiH_4 -containing product which is not condensed in the intermediate condensation;
- (d) further condensing any SiH_4 -containing product that is not condensed in the intermediate condensation and concentrated in the rectifying section in an overhead condenser from which the SiH_4 -containing product is discharged as final product.

16. (Previously Presented) A process according to Claim 15 wherein the pressure in the catalyst bed is from 1 to 10 bar.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) A process according to Claim 15 wherein the SiH_4 -containing product discharged is separated in the overhead condenser at a pressure higher than the pressure employed in the intermediate condensation.

19. (Currently Amended) A process according to Claim 15, further comprising:
introducing the product from the overhead condenser into a separation column;
collecting chlorosilane in said separation column;
feeding wherein all or part of the chlorosilane is returned to the reactive/distillative
reactive and distillative reaction zone.

20. (Currently Amended) An installation for the continuous preparation of silane of formula SiH_4 by catalytic disproportionation of trichlorosilane of formula SiHCl_3 to form SiH_4 and silicon tetrachloride of formula SiCl_4 in a reaction column having

- (1) a reactive/distillative reactive and distillative reaction zone comprising a catalyst bed
made of solid bodies of catalytically active solid and through which the

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disproportionation products and trichlorsilane can flow,

- (2) an inlet for introducing SiHCl_3 into the reactive zone,
- (3) an overhead condenser connected to the reaction column for condensing the SiH_4 -containing product that is formed and having an outlet for condensed SiH_4 at the overhead condenser,
- (4) at least one intermediate condenser arranged between the ~~reactive/distillative~~ reactive and distillative reaction zone and the overhead condenser, wherein the at least one intermediate condenser is operated at a temperature in the range from -5°C to 40°C ,
- (5) a rectifying section for increasing the SiH_4 -concentration in the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product which is not condensed in the at least one intermediate condenser being arranged downstream of the at least one intermediate condenser in a direction of flow of the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product coming from the at least one intermediate condenser, and
- (6) an outflow for SiCl_4 obtained as bottom product, ~~for carrying out the process according to Claim 15~~ is arranged in the reactive and distillative reaction zone.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented) An installation according to Claim 20 wherein the at least one intermediate condenser is arranged above the catalyst bed.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously Presented) An installation according to Claim 20 wherein a separation column for separating SiH_4 -containing product fractions from higher-boiling chlorosilane components is arranged downstream of the at least one intermediate condenser in a direction of flow of the lower-boiling product mixture coming from the at least one intermediate condenser.

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25. (Previously Presented) An installation according to Claim 24 wherein the separation column is arranged downstream of the rectifying section.

26. (Previously Presented) An installation according to Claim 25 wherein the overhead condenser is arranged between the rectifying section and the separation column.

27. (Previously Presented) An installation according to Claim 24 wherein the separation column is operated at a pressure higher than the pressure in the at least one intermediate condenser and the product that is conducted to the separation column is compressed.

28. (Currently Amended) An installation according to Claim 24 wherein a branch line that opens into a ~~reactive/distillative~~ reactive and distillative reaction zone of the reaction

column is connected to a bottom outlet of the separation column.

29. (Currently Amended) A process for producing silane, the process comprising the steps of:

providing a reactive/distillative reactive and distillative reaction zone including a catalyst bed of a catalytically active solid forming a lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product and a higher-boiling SiCl_4 -containing bottom product;

introducing SiHCl_3 into the reactive/distillative reactive and distillative reaction zone at a pressure of 1 to 50 bar and forming the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product and the higher-boiling SiCl_4 -containing bottom product;

removing the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product from the reactive/distillative reactive and distillative reaction zone;

cooling the SiH_4 -containing product after said removing in an intermediate condensation with temperatures in the range from -5°C to 40°C ;

providing a rectifying section;

introducing the lower-boiling SiH_4 -containing product which is not condensed during said cooling into a rectifying section to increasing a SiH_4 -concentration in the SiH_4 -containing product;

condensing the SiH_4 -containing product from the rectifying section in an overhead condenser from which the SiH_4 -containing product is discharged as final product.